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ABSTRACT

Reading is the foundation for literacy and comprehension is the foundation for education. Many learning disabled students struggle to understand what they have read and many instructional approaches in small group settings focus on decoding rather than on comprehension. Employing a dual strategic approach to facilitate comprehension enables students to become more effective readers. Direct instruction of story grammar incorporated with retelling techniques allows students to identify major story elements while strengthening oral language skills. This strategy was reinforced through story framing which was modeled and practiced with 10 learning disabled students (ranging in age from 6 to 7 and ranging in ability from beginning first grade to beginning second grade reading levels) to improve their written language ability and ultimately increase their comprehension. By empowering students through instruction that is strategic in nature, learning disabled students will likely meet with greater reading success. (Contains 25 references and 2 tables of data; an appendix contains 4 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

The Effects of Using a Combination of Story Frames and Retelling Strategies with Learning Disabled Students to Build Their Comprehension Ability

by

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Reading is the foundation for literacy and comprehension is the foundation for education. Many learning disabled students struggle to understand what they have read and many instructional approaches in small group settings focus on decoding rather than on comprehension. Employing a dual strategic approach to facilitate comprehension enables students to become more effective readers. Direct instruction of story grammar incorporated with retelling techniques allows students to identify major story elements while strengthening oral language skills. This strategy is reinforced through story framing which is modeled and practiced with learning disabled students in order to improve their written language ability and ultimately increase their comprehension. By empowering students through instruction that is strategic in nature, learning disabled students will likely meet with greater reading success.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, much research has been conducted in the area of how teachers foster reading comprehension in their classrooms. In the late 1970's Durkin found that questioning was the major instructional strategy used to teach comprehension. It was noted that a typical questioning session was really an assessment activity that was of little value in developing lasting comprehension skills. Although questioning may enhance learning, it does not appear to help children develop strategies that can be used independently while reading. Thus, the question that researchers and educators face then is this; what effective strategies can be employed to help teachers build comprehension skills in their students as they mature as readers?

In the last decade comprehension research has encouraged teachers to give their students opportunities to become more engaged in literature. In first grade, students form initial impressions of the actual act of reading. Therefore comprehension strategies taught and practiced in first grade can have a lasting impact on children's perceptions of the reading process. Two strategies that can be implemented as early as first grade are story frames and story retelling techniques. Both strategies enable students to become more aware of and more involved with text. They are also appropriate (when modified) at any grade level and with students demonstrating difficulty with reading.

Story frames employ a cloze procedure whereby students write in missing bits of key information to complete a story summary. Story frames coupled with an early introduction to basic story elements (setting, character, problem and solution) direct student's attention to the structure of a story and how any content can fit that structure. The important advantage to consistently using various types of story frames is that after the technique has been learned, most

children begin to use this strategy as an independent tool for organizing and remembering information (Cudd and Roberts, 1987).

Teachers have found that story frames are especially effective in the primary grades and in remedial classes (Fowler, 1982). Story frames can be used not only to help children organize information, but to analyze characters and their problems, make comparisons, identify important ideas and summarize passage content.

Retelling is an instructional strategy that involves students in the verbal reconstruction of printed text that they are exposed to. Aside from the fact that verbal retelling of a story allows for rehearsal of information read, one particular study suggests that retelling positively affects quantity and quality of what is learned from the text (Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus, 1991). It was also found that when students practiced simple story retelling, story structure awareness for both proficient and less proficient readers was enhanced.

Retelling is a technique that helps readers to focus attention on the holistic nature of the story and therefore provides a framework for comprehension and elaboration. It also provides a way for students to process information verbally with organization and understanding. Through the active process of story retelling, schema theorists indicate the importance of helping children develop a "sense of story" as a prerequisite to comprehending different types of literature (Golden, 1984). By incorporating story retelling strategies into reading programs, a teacher is providing an effective means of developing their student's comprehension and general knowledge (Roney, 1989).

In many remedial reading programs, instruction focuses on lower-level decoding skills instead of comprehension. Research indicates that readers in low-level reading groups spend

most of their time in round robin oral reading, are directed to focus their attention on recognizing words rather than constructing meaning, receive more drill on isolated words and are asked to respond to literal rather than higher order questions. Such instruction seems to be generally ineffective and only tends to make poorer readers poorer (Weaver, 1990). Strategies that are appropriate for teaching developmental readers, those making normal progress in reading, should be generally similar for those who are poor readers. However, special programs for those with reading problems should provide more individualized, highly specialized techniques.

The question then that needs to be addressed is whether a dual strategic approach (focusing on the strategies of retelling and story frames) employed in a self-contained neurologically impaired classroom of six to eight year old students would be effective in improving such learning disabled student's comprehension ability.

HYPOTHESIS

It was hypothesized that when story frames and retelling techniques are introduced, practiced and reinforced with learning disabled students during reading instruction, their comprehension ability will not increase.

PROCEDURES

This study was conducted in a self-contained neurologically impaired class of ten students ranging in age from six to seven and ranging in ability from beginning first grade to beginning second grade reading levels. The classifications of the students encompassed

perceptual impairments, communication handicaps, neurological impairments and attention deficit disorders. All ten students participated in this study. Of the ten children, two were girls and eight were boys. They were all from average socioeconomic backgrounds.

To begin this study, all ten students were orally administered a question and answer pretest. The pretest was based on a story that the children had listened to in class. The same pretest was given in the same fashion to all students. Ten questions of literal (3), inferential (3), and story grammar (4) were asked. The student's answers were recorded and graded against an established protocol for each item. Partial credit was granted and each item was weighted equally. During the pretest session, after the students had answered their questions, the children were asked to retell the story to the best of their ability into a tape recorder. Their retellings were later transcribed and graded according to the total number of story grammar elements recalled including sequence of events.

One week later it was explained to the class that they would be involved in a unit of literature related to bears. Several fictional books about bears were displayed around the room along with posters of bears and poetry of bears. Over the course of the next five weeks students listened to ten different stories that had a common bear theme. The books had been carefully selected based upon an analysis of how well story schema instruction could be applied to the stories. During this time period the students created several bear art projects that were displayed on bulletin boards and they learned a bear poem that was occasionally chanted in unison in class. All of these activities were developed to help immerse students into the theme and to provide motivation for the study.

For the first two and a half weeks of the study, the teacher used the books to teach story

schema. Charts, posters and webs were developed as a class and individually to make students aware of story characters, settings, events and story solutions. Direct instruction was a necessary component to enable students to identify the various story grammar elements we were focusing on. Pre and post discussions for each book were also effective in developing their understanding of the different story elements. At the conclusion of each of the first five books, a story frame was completed. The teacher put the frame on the overhead projector and modeled the process for completing the frame. The students were eventually encouraged to participate in the completion of the story frame. Each frame was basically the same format whereby key elements from the story were missing. Students needed to recall essential information from what they had listened to and attention was paid to key elements through the reading in order to prepare the students for the frames. In the second half of the study, story frames were completed with less teacher direction and more student independence.

At the halfway point through the study, students were taught a strategy for retelling. The strategy "SPOT" was labeled on the blackboard as follows:

S - Setting

P - Problem

O - Order

T - Tail End

The strategy was modeled by the teacher. Two short stories were interjected in order to teach and model this strategy on two consecutive days. Following that, an author's chair was established in the class. Two children per the next five books were encouraged to sit in the author's chair in order to retell the story by using the SPOT technique. The visual cue was left

for each individual to see and refer to. The SPOT technique also incorporated what they had learned about story grammar. Each retelling took no longer than five minutes. Also, in their individual reading groups, the children were encouraged to retell the short stories they were learning to read by utilizing the same technique. This was to allow for generalization and application of the strategy they had learned. When homework was assigned for their reading work whereby children had to read or reread passages to their parents at home, notices were sent home asking parents to model and encourage retelling of the information they were reading.

At the conclusion of the tenth book, the students helped to create a language experience story about a bear as a closure activity for the unit. After one week away from this unit, a post test was administered. The class listened to a story unrelated to the bear theme previously shared. Individually, each student was administered a ten question comprehension test that was in the same format as the pretest. They were then asked to retell the story into the tape recorder. It took no longer than 60 minutes to test all the students in this class. Again, their retellings were later transcribed and grade for the number of story grammar elements recalled. Mean scores of the of the comprehension pre and post tests (as well as the story grammar elements) were analyzed for significant differences.

RESULTS

The subjects were given a pre and post comprehension test to determine if the strategies implemented were effective in developing student's awareness of story structure as well as improving their literal and inferential comprehension skills. The raw scores for individual students can be found in the appendix. The tables on the following page provide the mean scores for the ten students tested, the standard deviation and the t test results.

TABLE I: Pre and Post Comprehension Results

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Pre-test	3.70	2.67	-3.8
Post-test	7.50	2.22	

TABLE II: Pre and Post Story Retelling Results

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Pre-test	.90	.85	-3.05
Post-test	2.30	1.16	

As the t obtained in both assessments was greater than .01, a significant difference was noted for these two measures of comprehension development. Throughout the study, the students appropriately used and applied such vocabulary as setting, characters, problem and solution. Before the study, students were unfamiliar with story framework and demonstrated great difficulty attending to and understanding the literature that they listened to and what they were reading during their reading instructional groups.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Since the results were so overwhelmingly positive and the mean differences significant below the .01 level, the hypothesis that no improvement in comprehension or story grammar would occur was rejected. A marked improvement in the ability to correctly answer factual and inferential questions was noted. By implementing strategies to build comprehension, students were taught a variety of techniques so that they would be able to identify and recognize story grammar elements. Providing motivation through a thematic unit (Brown and Cambourne, 1989) set the stage for the retelling and story frame strategies to be introduced, taught and practiced. Direct instruction of the strategies is essential for effective learning to occur. By consistently demonstrating and rehearsing the techniques as well as overlapping strategies that reinforce the same skill, a useful teaching guide was established for instructors to employ the two comprehension tools; framing and retelling. These strategies, when presented coherently, will greatly impact the comprehension ability of young, learning disabled readers. Another area that this study seemed to impact on was the student's ability to focus on the story at hand. Once the children understood the key story grammar being taught, it allowed them to attend to the story as they were expected to listen and determine those elements. Overall, the students appeared to enjoy the study as it enabled them to understand and enjoy literature more effectively.

RELATED RESEARCH:

The effects of using a Combination of Story Frames and Retelling Strategies with Learning Disabled Students to Build their Comprehension Ability

What is reading?

To define the act of reading is not an easy task. The accepted definition for the reading process has been altered over the years thus influencing the various reading techniques that have been implemented in classrooms for decades. It is true that reading is a continuously developing skill. Today it is generally accepted that reading is a process of constructing meaning; that learning to read does not stop when a child is able to decipher words. Becoming competent decoders only allows readers to have a tool for learning and understanding (Snyder and Tarver, 1987). A clear definition of reading detailed by Wixson and Peters in 1987 states that reading is an interactive means for gaining information from the ideas suggested by a text according to the reader's prior knowledge, purpose, available strategies, and understanding of the task. It is obvious to see from this definition that reading comprehension emphasizes more than practice on isolated skills and fluent decoding.

In 1990 Weaver reported that students demonstrating difficulty with reading skills and who were placed in low level reading groups were taught to focus their attention on recognizing words. They also received a great deal of drill on isolated skills and spent a vast amount of their time in round robin oral reading activities. Weaver found that such instruction tended to be generally ineffective.

Nature of Learning Disabilities

A majority of schoolchildren identified as learning disabled exhibit serious reading disabilities. Learning disabilities are a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous entity (Gallagher, 1989; Rourke, 1991). Learning disabilities can be viewed as a lack of congruence between a child's pattern of cognitive strengths and the cognitive strengths needed to perform an academic task (Gallagher, 1989). Varied academic tasks require different types of cognitive skills, and the requirements for academic success change at various educational levels. Weakness in cognitive processing may exist but will cause no difficulties until it is required for academic success and the person is unable to perform.

Learning disabilities may remain hidden as long as students are able to compensate and meet the demands of the task (Lavin, 1995). Weakness in language, memory, and perceptual motor skills become apparent when the compensatory strategies are no longer adequate (Meltzer, 1994). Much research has been conducted to identify specific subtypes of learning disabilities, and indeed specific subtypes involving reading, arithmetic and a combination of the two have been identified (Rourke, 1994; Shafir & Siegel, 1994). The largest number of learning disabilities relate to reading (Lavin, 1995).

Reading disabilities though, are not uniformly categorized. Thus, a wide range of reading problems has been identified among learning disabled students (Paris & Oka, 1989). As a consequence, many researchers have examined the role of specific psychological processes in reading disabilities such as visual perception, word recognition and strategy deficits. Stanovich (1986) noted that many of these approaches share the "assumption of specificity" in which a learning disability is regarded as a particular, localized deficiency that can be treated effectively if diagnosed properly. This orientation has generated competing scientific hypotheses and educational remedies that are often too narrow to help students learn better in classrooms (Paris & Oka, 1989). Even if there is a specific cause for an individual's reading disability, the problem becomes a pervasive characteristic over time as it influences development of cognitive strategies, acquisition of knowledge in content areas, and motivation for learning (Licht & Kistner, 1986). Without denying the specific etiology of learning disabilities, including the category of reading deficiencies, it is believed there are both theoretical and practical benefits of a general focus on the cognitive and motivational strategies for unsuccessful students (Paris & Oka, 1989).

Background on Strategic Learning

Reading strategies are important for students with learning difficulties for several reasons. Firstly, there is little direct instruction focused on reading strategies provided in the classroom. Teachers rarely explain and allow sufficient practice with cognitive

strategies that can improve a student's reading ability. Secondly, some children do not have a clear understanding of what reading strategies are. For example, some poor readers believe that the main idea is always stated in the first sentence of a paragraph, that summarizing a story means telling anything and everything that they can recall from a story, that skimming means reading a few words as quickly as possible and that good readers do not need to reread (Paris & Jacobs, 1984; Winogad, 1984). Thirdly, many students are not motivated to use reading strategies even when they are offered because poor readers do not know where to invest their energy while others devote too much time to pronunciation, word calling, or repeated reading. Furthermore and lastly, the nature of learning disabled children's reading difficulties may limit the benefit they derive from instruction. If they struggle to decode words, they may not know how to integrate new skills into their limited abilities. Instruction in cognitive strategies need not only be motivational so that students will expend the effort to use appropriate strategies, but the strategies need to be designed so that their relevance and utility become apparent to learning disabled readers.

This requires a broad view of these children and a multidimensional perspective on their problems. Such a perspective stands in sharp contrast to a traditional view that ignores motivation while addressing problems of learning to read in a hierarchical manner - first remediating decoding problems, then addressing higher levels of comprehension. Therefore instructional techniques that attempt to engage students thoughtfully in the process of constructing meaning must be explored.

In the past ten years there has been a great deal of emphasis on providing students with more detailed information about strategies. When students understand fully which strategies are appropriate to use, how they operate, when they should be applied, and why they are necessary, they are more motivated to use them (Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983). Cognitive strategies that help readers construct meaning from text are used routinely by successful students (Baker & Brown, 1984; Garner, 1987). However, learning disabled

students do not use these strategies effectively without assistance. In an attempt to counteract inefficient strategies among learning disabled students, various investigators have instructed students in how to use specific strategies for processing text (Paris, Waist & van der Westuizen, 1988).

What strategies can be employed?

Two such strategies that have shown to help learning disabled (LD) children to comprehend more successfully include story frames and retelling techniques.

The reading comprehension and written language deficits that characterize many LD individuals could be attributed to a lack of story schema knowledge, a failure to use story schema knowledge during comprehension tasks, or a lack of awareness and control in applying story grammar knowledge when writing stories (Montague, 1988). Retelling techniques and story frames address these issues. The limited research that has been done on both of these strategies suggests that when taught and practiced, the comprehension ability of LD students will be enhanced (Fowler,1982; Gambrell, Kapinus, Koskinen, 1991).

One of the underlying assumptions of this study is the belief that direct instruction for story schema awareness is a key to building reading comprehension in any child. According to Mandler and Johnson (1977), Rumelhart (1975), and Thorndyke (1977), story structures are based upon an analysis of well-formed stories, all of which contain the following components:

***setting**: time, place, characters
***theme**: beginning events that cause the main character to react in some way
***plot episodes**: events in which the main character attempts to attain a goal or solve a problem
***resolution**: the attainment of the goal or a solution to the problem

In a 1976 study by Bower, it was found that if children are trained to become more aware of story structure, they will ultimately be able to tell more cohesive, sequential, organized

stories. Thus, direct instruction in story grammar must be a precedent for any comprehension task; especially when LD students are asked to retell stories or to complete story frames.

Retelling Strategy

When people talk about retelling they usually mean something like a reconstruction of any kind of text. The retelling procedure developed by Hazel Brown and Brian Cambourne involves much more than this. Their belief suggests that the process of retelling begin with immersing students in a genre or topic of study. Students cannot retell information when they have no background knowledge; neither can they use unfamiliar genre. A retelling must come, therefore, only after students have been immersed in a unit of work, and the retelling itself must be an integral part of that unit (Hobart, 1989). During immersion the teacher involves students in some intense background building activities related to the topic for the chosen retelling. By doing this, an LD child is not only provided with motivation, but their schemata (experiential, background information) is activated. The next step in the Brown-Cambourne retelling process is to have children predict and share their thoughts about the title and about phrases that appear in the text. This ongoing interaction is again meant to motivate students and to tap their vocabulary. Thirdly, students engage in the reading or listening of the text. When students read the text, they are encouraged to read carefully and purposefully. On other occasions, teachers can focus on the listening skills of students by reading aloud to them. The final step is for the child to produce a retelling of that text.

As stated by Sorrell in 1996, teacher-directed instruction during reading increases comprehension. A strategy that can easily and directly be taught to LD students in order to facilitate their retellings is a technique coined as SPOT (Bender, 1996). This strategy encourages students to "SPOT the Story" as a cue for remembering major story points. SPOT not only improves an individual's recall of a story but it demonstrates a connection with the story grammar students had hopefully been introduce to at a prior time.

SPOT denotes that while a student engages in a retelling, they *SPOT* the following:

***Setting**: who, what, where, when
***Problem**: what's the problem or what goal is trying to be attained
***Order of action**: What events happened to solve the problem or attain the goal
***Tail end**: what is the resolution

By motivating LD students with pre-reading activities through immersion, focusing their attention during reading and offering a strategic means which allows them to verbally reconstruct a previously read story, it is believed that a child will construct meaning from a text in an effective way (Hobart, 1989).

When compared with another comprehension strategy, retelling demonstrated to be a highly potent, generative learning strategy which has direct, beneficial consequences on children's processing of textual information (Gambrell, et al, 1985). This was found as a result of Gambrell, Pfeiffer, and Wilson's 1985 study where retelling was compared to illustrating as a means for comprehension development. Ninety-three fourth grade students were randomly assigned to either of the two stated treatment conditions. One group was instructed to retell a story and the other group was instructed to depict the story through illustration; instructions for both modes emphasized major story events. All subjects were encouraged to focus attention on the major ideas and supporting details for silently read passages.

All subjects met for four training sessions and one test session. After silently reading a test passage, each child completed an outline which focused on major story ideas and details. Each subject was then asked to retell the information from the passage (this assessment was labeled free recall). To complete the testing session, each subject answered twenty cued recall questions. All responses were recorded on tape and then transcribed. The 20-item cued recall test was graded on a standard percentage basis while the free recalls were scored based upon Spencer's prose scoring system (1973).

Within the study, the retelling sample performed better than did the illustrating sample on all measures of comprehension. Differences were significant.

Another study put forth by Gambrell, Kapinus, and Koskinen in 1991 investigated whether practice with retelling affected retelling performance and whether practice in retelling differentially affected the reading comprehension performance of proficient and less proficient readers. Forty-eight fourth grade students from Maryland (28 proficient and 28 less proficient readers as determined by scores on the Cognitive Abilities Test) were randomly assigned to one of four story-order conditions. The stories were selected based on the ability levels of the two groups. Each subject met individually with the researcher for four sessions over a two week period during which time they read stories and were given opportunities to "become good storytellers." Each retelling was tape-recorded for later assessment. A text-based outline of the story structure elements for each story had been developed at the onset of the study to serve as a scoring protocol. Also, a cued-recall assessment that consisted of four text-implicit questions and four text-explicit questions were developed for each story.

All of the taped retellings were scored based on the protocol established for each story. After the first and third sessions, subjects were asked to respond to the eight orally administered questions about the story that they had read. The results of the study showed significant improvement on all reading comprehension assessment tasks for all subjects after only four practice sessions. Proficient readers had a gain of 15% on recall of story structure elements from session one to four and less-proficient readers had a gain 0f 18%. The findings in this study concluded that retelling can be an effective instructional strategy for improving reading comprehension. The authors of this study further imply that there is a strong relationship between oral language and reading proficiency. Therefore by engaging a reader in verbal rehearsal of text-acquired information, a framework that enhances comprehension is built while a reader is focused on the holistic nature of a story. Earlier cited in this 1985 study was another work by

Rose, Cundick and Higbee (1984) who found that verbal rehearsal, in the form of retelling, significantly increased the reading comprehension performance of elementary-aged learning disabled children.

Story Frames

Research on the interrelatedness of reading and writing has shown that both processes involve the construction of meaning (Rubin & Hansen, 1984; Tierney & Pearson, 1984). This is important to this study as students were expected to read, retell and then transfer their text-acquired information into a written formula. The relationship between the two processes is helpful in emphasizing to students that meaning is not fixed in the text, but that it is continually being constructed as students read, reflect and write (Hernandez-Miller,1991).

With learning disabled students, writing in response to stories in order to facilitate comprehension, can be a tall order. In a study conducted by Montague in 1988, significant differences were found between learning disabled and non learning disabled students in the amount as well as the type of information they included in their written respondes to material they had read. After simultaneously reading and listening to a story, LD students across grade levels (4th through 11th) produced fewer total units of information, generated fewer internal responses to characters and produced less examples of story setting in written responses to the stories. The study further concluded that independent stories written by LD students were incohesive, unorganized and incomplete.

By attending to writing in order to build upon what has been read is compatible with the current thinking that "meaning making" should be the focus of reading and writing (Thompson and Taymans, 1994). Cognitive strategies can be applied for writing tasks as well as reading tasks in order to foster comprehension in children.

Story frames are one type of strategy that can be implemented to help students become more aware of stories and more familiar with the structure of stories (Oja, 1996).

Story frames can take on various forms, but for the purpose of this study, the cloze procedure type of frame will be discussed. In a fill-in-the-blank frame, students recall the general story elements presented in a recently read text. Teachers are encouraged to model the technique of story frames, then students do it with assistance and finally they complete story frames on their own (Clark et al, 1984).

Like retelling, story frames provide opportunities for students to become more engaged in literature and directs attention to the actual structure of a story. The story frame strategy is particularly effective as students develop summarizing skills. Frames allow for the content of a story to fit into a general framework which delineates the basic story structure of any given text. However, it is important to recognize that because not all elements in a specific story frame are present in all stories, it may be necessary for teachers and students to slightly alter their previously used story frames to fit a passage (Oja, 1996).

Fowler in 1982 provided a means for presenting story frames to a group of children. After reading a story, the teacher displays a story frame which looks like a sequence of spaces hooked together by key language elements. Children look at the first line or set of key words of the frame, then discuss possible responses. The frames are relatively open-ended and no specific words or answers are intended for each space. Next, the teacher moves the discussion to subsequent lines of the frame and students are asked to select bits of information that will connect the story structure represented in the frame. From this point, the discussion should move back and forth through the story frame so that the children can make as many connections as possible. The goal is to help children construct models of appropriate sets of responses. Eventually most children are able to organize information independently in order to complete various story frames. When children are familiar and comfortable with using story frames, they can apply them to help organize reports and oral presentations.

In 1980 Nichols stated that paragraph frames helped his high school students who had language arts problems. Nichols said that "the intent of the frame is to provide a structure for organizing a student's responses to a variety of content material." Elementary teachers are also finding them useful in organizing oral responses as well (Fowler, 1982).

In a two year period, Cudd and Roberts experimented with the use of story frames as a strategy for teaching comprehension in first grade classrooms. In first grade students form initial impressions of the actual act of reading. Therefore, comprehension strategies initiated in first grade can have a lasting effect on children's perceptions of reading (Cudd & Roberts, 1987). In support of Fowler's research, it was found that the use of story frames coupled with an early introduction to the basic elements of story grammar (setting, characters, problem and resolution) directed student's attention to the concept of well structured stories. Story details were referred to only as they contributed to story organization. Children learned to focus on relevant, related text, rather than unimportant detail.

Cudd and Roberts found that developing story frames involved a simple process that can be varied in order to fit most any story. Thus, story frames can be a readily available tool for teachers at any grade level. As students become more mature readers, story frames can increase in length and complexity. It was also concluded that by providing direct instruction in using story frames, even the most reluctant students can experience success. The important outgrowth of using the story frames with the first grade class was that by the end of that year, most children were beginning to use their skills as an independent means for organizing and remembering important information from stories they had read. As the children grow, they then carry with them a guide for comprehending various texts that they encounter as well as a guide for writing original stories.

As stated in the introduction of the NJ Core Curriculum Standards for Language Arts Literacy, teachers must enable students to think logically and creatively; express ideas; understand and participate meaningfully in spoken and written communications; formulate and answer questions; and search for, organize and evaluate information. Language arts are integrative, interactive ways of thinking that develop through reading, writing, speaking and listening. Literacy is more than the acquisition of a specific, predetermined set of skills. It is recognizing one's own purposes for thinking and communicating and being able to use one's own resources to achieve those purposes. The standards set forth by the NJ Language Arts Core Curriculum Guide are intended to promote student's capacities to construct meaning in any arena. If students learn to do this they will have the literacy skills they need to discover personal and shared meaning throughout their lives.

By empowering learning disabled students to meet educational demands through motivational and strategic teaching, it is hoped that they will also achieve the goals expected of them by the state; and that teachers might provide the encouragement and scaffolding for them to do so.

APPENDIX

PRE-TEST; STORY RETELLING *The Wolf and the Kids*
(+ = students correctly recalled element; O = students did not identify that element)

SAMPLE	SETTING	PROBLEM	ORDER	TAIL END
A	O	O	O	+
B	O	O	+	O
C	O	O	O	O
D	O	O	O	O
E	O	O	+	O
F	O	+	O	+
G	O	O	O	O
H	O	O	O	O
I	O	+	+	O
J	O	+	O	+

PRE-TEST; COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS
The Little Red Hen

SAMPLE	STORY GRAMMAR 4	LITERAL 3	INFERENTIAL 3	TOTAL 10
A	3	3	1	7
B	2	1	0	3
C	O	O	O	O
D	O	1	1	2
E	1	1	1	3
F	2	2	2	6
G	0	0	0	0
H	0	2	1	3
I	2	2	2	6
J	2	2	3	7

POST-TEST; STORY RETELLING *The Wild Pig and the Old Mule*
(+ = students correctly recalled element; O = students did not identify that element)

SAMPLE	SETTING	PROBLEM	ORDER	TAIL END
A	O	+	O	+
B	O	+	+	+
C	O	O	O	O
D	+	+	O	O
E	O	O	O	+
F	+	+	+	O
G	O	+	+	+
H	O	+	O	+
I	+	+	+	+
J	O	+	+	+

POST-TEST; COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS
Amalia and the Grasshopper

SAMPLE	STORY GRAMMAR 4	LITERAL 3	INFERENTIAL 3	TOTAL 10
A	3	2	3	8
B	4	2	1	7
C	1	O	1	2
D	3	2	3	8
E	2	2	2	6
F	4	3	3	10
G	4	1	3	8
H	2	2	4	8
I	4	2	3	9
J	4	2	3	9

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